

# **Best practices and lessons learned from practical mainstreaming of gender and diversity in mine action**

**Workshop hosted by the Gender and Diversity Working Group<sup>1</sup>, 30-31 May 2022**

**Co-sponsored by Colombia and the United Kingdom**

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

On 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022, the Gender and Diversity Working Group organised a virtual workshop with the objective of identifying challenges and good practices on mainstreaming gender and diversity in mine action from the perspectives of affected states, donors, operators and survivor organisations. The gender and diversity provisions in the Oslo Action Plan (OAP) of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Lausanne Action Plan (LAP) of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) framed the workshop. Colombia, who holds the presidency of the APMBC, and the United Kingdom, who holds the presidency of the CCM, co-sponsored the workshop.

In line with the provisions in the two Action Plans, the workshop examined how gender and diversity considerations can be better mainstreamed in survey and clearance, risk education, victim assistance and international cooperation and assistance. It also sought to understand how to overcome the obstacles to full, equal and meaningful women's participation in mine action operations and Convention meetings, and to raise awareness of the intersection between gender and factors of vulnerability and exclusion (e.g. age, religion, ethnicity, language, disability etc).

The Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines (CCCM), one of the two current co-chairs of the GDWG introduced the workshop on the first day, followed by opening remarks from Ambassador Álvaro Enrique Ayala Meléndez, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations in Geneva. Humanity & Inclusion (HI) framed the discussion by explaining how gender intersects with other diversity factors. This was followed by a presentation from GICHD on mainstreaming gender and diversity in non-technical survey (NTS) and community liaison (CL) activities. Colombia outlined how explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and victim assistance (VA) are tailored with a gender, diversity and disability lens in a diverse context, with multiple indigenous groups and languages. The Afghan Landmine Survivors' Organization (ALSO) and HI also spoke about mainstreaming gender, diversity and disability in victim assistance.

The second day of the workshop started with a summary of the previous day provided by the Halo Trust, one of the two co-chairs of the GDWG. This was followed by opening remarks from Ambassador Aidan Liddle, the UK's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The UK and Canada presented different ways of mainstreaming gender in international cooperation and assistance. Cambodia provided an overview of in-country efforts to ensure inclusive employment and participation of women in mine action, while Norway reflected on women's participation in convention meetings. Spain made recommendations on the inclusion of gender and diversity considerations in treaty reporting to support the implementation of the Oslo and Lausanne Action Plans. On both days, the rich presentations were followed by smaller group discussions, where participants exchanged challenges and lessons learned.

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<sup>1</sup> The Gender and Diversity Working Group comprises representatives from the following 12 organisations: Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines, DanChurchAid, Danish Refugee Council, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, The HALO Trust, Humanity & Inclusion, International Campaign to Ban Landmines-Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC), Mines Action Canada, Mines Advisory Group, Mine Action Review, Norwegian People's Aid, SEHLAC (Seguridad Humana en Latino América y el Caribe).

## **Key findings and recommendations**

The practical implementation of gender and diversity considerations requires tailored approaches and improving knowledge, attitudes and practices. Although this may present context-specific challenges, there are some general good practices and approaches that the sector can benefit from.

### **1. Gender and diversity mainstreaming improves effectiveness of mine action**

Women, girls, boys and men have different roles and responsibilities due to gender norms. For instance, in some communities, boys are responsible for grazing animals, while women are responsible for collecting firewood. This means that different groups have different mobility patterns and exposure to risks and therefore may hold different information on contamination. Risk taking is also often socialised in a gendered way, which can be seen in the global explosive ordnance (EO)-related accident statistics, with the majority of casualties being male. Different groups have different access to services and resources, which means they may have different needs and therefore different priorities regarding mine action interventions. Including different groups in CL, NTS and EORE is essential to ensure an effective approach to mine action. Without analysing different patterns of behaviour and adapting operations accordingly, mine action operations may fail to capture important contamination information or fail to deliver relevant EORE to at risk groups.

It is also important to understand how EO accidents affect men and women differently and design VA programmes that guarantee equal access to women, girls, boys and men with and without disabilities. For instance, in Colombia, men are more likely to survive than women (29% vs. 14%). Men who cease to be the main providers for their families feel more vulnerable, while women survivors are at greater risk of being abandoned by their partners altogether. Women with disabilities face greater risk of sexual violence. It is important to empower women and girls with disabilities so they know their rights, develop their capacities and promote their autonomy.

### **2. Gender is an entry point towards other diversity considerations**

The mine action sector has made progress with understanding how mine action benefits men and women. However, gender is only one of many identity factors that facilitate or impede how much one can benefit from an intervention. Factors that can lead to exclusion and vulnerability include age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion and political opinion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and geographic location. Building on the increasing acceptance in the mine action sector of gender mainstreaming, we need to consider how other diversity factors intersect and affect the social dynamics in a given context. For example, an intersectional approach would mean understanding that a woman with a disability, living in a rural area and from an ethnic minority group is more likely to be excluded from mine action activities compared to other women due to multiple levels of stigma and discrimination. Reaching her would require tailoring activities based on all the identity factors that may lead to her exclusion. Intersectional approaches help ensure we leave no one behind.

### **3. Adaptation is key to accommodate participation of different groups in mine action**

In order to be effective, mine action should use gender and diversity analysis to adapt operations and respond to the needs of different groups in mine-affected communities. Good practice entails assessing if meeting times and spaces for community engagement activities are accessible for all groups. Or if the tools used are accidentally excluding people with low levels of literacy, those who do not speak the language or people with disabilities. Cultural norms need to be considered – for instance, women may not communicate effectively if men are in the room or they may not receive medical assistance if there is no access to female medics. Acknowledging the need for adaptation

should, in turn, influence the design and planning of operations, as well as the configuration of teams – for instance, teams recruited from local communities, who speak the local languages and which include both women and men are most effective in their work.

Colombia, which has a lot of diversity of indigenous groups and languages has developed EORE materials in multiple indigenous languages, including materials accessible for populations with disabilities. Teams adjust deployment times to access particular groups, such as women or youth. Women commit to replicate messages with children, and youth do so with their peers. Activities are tailored by age, so for instance activities targeted at youth provide opportunities for recreation through sport or theatre, while learning about EORE. When creating safe spaces for certain groups to engage, this can have a wider beneficial effect. For instance, EORE workshops have become spaces for women’s solidarity, while activities targeted at youth have provided an opportunity for recognition of young leaders by authorities, local leaders and their peers.

#### **4. Disaggregated data should be systematically used to inform operations**

A lot of emphasis has been placed on collection of disaggregated data on the impact of EO on different groups. APMBC and CCM transparency reports and clearance deadline extension requests have seen increasing use of disaggregated data on EORE beneficiaries and sometimes clearance or victim assistance beneficiaries. However, the analysis that explains how the data was used to adjust operations is usually missing. Data collection is important, but the objective is not simply to collect and report it, but to analyse it and use it systematically to inform operations and policy making processes and this should be reflected in reporting under the APMBC and CCM.

#### **5. The indirect impact of contamination should be acknowledged and addressed**

Although the majority of EO accident survivors globally are male, this has significant indirect impact on women, who become caregivers and heads of households and need socio-economic support. In Colombia, 90% of caregivers are women and only 4.5% of caregivers receive income for care. They often do not have a stable job, do not get a pension, and do not have access to sexual and reproductive health. States must understand their condition and develop public policies that support social re-inclusion of caregivers who play a critical role in the rehabilitation of EO accident survivors.

#### **6. Women’s groups or networks can help to facilitate women’s empowerment**

In Afghanistan, as in many other places, women and girls with disabilities suffer discrimination. One way to empower women with disabilities is through the creation of networks that use women with disabilities as role models, raise awareness of the challenges of living with a disability and provide a support network. Survivor associations that are led by women generate bonds of trust that allow women to express the situation they are going through as caregivers or as survivors. Similarly, in Colombia, victim assistance implemented through associations of survivors, indigenous people and afro-Colombians has proven successful; they work, among others, to sensitise the community and promote re-inclusion and acceptance of female indigenous survivors of EO accidents.

#### **7. Mine action should pursue opportunities to transform gender norms**

Providing employment opportunities for women in mine action enables socio-economic inclusion and the independence that comes with a steady income can help them avoid gender-based violence. Some operators have used their access and influence to promote transformative projects that go beyond mine action. For instance, CCCM trained three gender focal points to deliver gender workshops focused on preventing gender-based violence in indigenous communities in Colombia.

National mine action authorities can also play a leading role in promoting employment of women in the sector. Cambodia is a good example that other mine-affected states should follow. Cambodia

includes gender in country policies and structures and consolidates disaggregated employment figures at a country level. Cambodia has prioritised gender equality and women's empowerment in its National Mine Action Strategy (2018-25), it has Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action and a chapter on Gender and Diversity in the Cambodian Mine Action Standards. In addition, the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) established a Technical Reference Group on gender mainstreaming as a mechanism to monitor progress and results. The group, composed of representatives from CMAA, relevant ministries and institutions, national and international operators, meets at least once a year to discuss challenges, find solutions and share good practices regarding inclusive employment. Challenges remain – for instance the numbers of female candidates applying for demining jobs is low as women lack encouragement from family, and female staff are more likely to resign after marriage or maternity leave. However, Cambodia has managed to increase the number of women working in mine action from 843 in 2019 to 942 in 2020.

#### **8. International cooperation and assistance is key to advancing gender and diversity mainstreaming**

Donor governments are increasingly taking steps to ensure gender is mainstreamed throughout programmes. This includes conducting their own gender analysis in business cases and implementing assessment processes that evaluate how gender is taken into account by implementing partners at an organisational level and in specific mine action projects. Demonstrating a strong commitment to safeguarding is critical. Donors are also focusing more on disability, taking another step towards broader inclusion and intersectional approaches. Donors should allocate appropriate budgets for gender mainstreaming, including for gender assessments and research projects. At the same time, implementers should also request what they need in order to better mainstreaming gender.

Some donors such as Canada, which has a feminist international assistance policy, pursue gender equality as an end in its own right. In addition to mainstreaming gender in mine action programmes, Canada supports projects that enable the voices of women and marginalised groups to be heard in arms control regimes, to show how they are affected differently by the issues at hand and create opportunities for their experiences to influence decision-making. This ensures the arms control community becomes aware of any potential blind spots, and arms control policy does not end up in an echo-chamber, separated from reality.

#### **9. Gender advisers help make meaningful progress**

In many organisations, the important responsibility of mainstreaming gender and diversity is left with junior staff who are named gender focal points. When organisations recruit experienced Gender Advisers, we see better results. Donors should employ gender experts who can work with implementing partners and/or provide funding for partners to employ gender experts directly. This expertise can ensure that gender mainstreaming remains a key priority throughout project implementation, that gender activities are adequately reported on, lessons are learned, and new projects improve and build on past ones.

#### **10. Inclusive indicators allow monitoring of the quality of mine action programmes**

Gender and diversity considerations should be included in project design from the beginning, not grafted to the project at the end, as an afterthought. Doing so should enable the creation of inclusive indicators in theories of change and performance management frameworks that enable stakeholders to measure change in capacity, knowledge and awareness of gender mainstreaming and how that translates in changes in behaviour or practice. For instance, increased awareness may translate in the long term in increased discussions on gender mainstreaming at APMBBC and CCM meetings, or in increased inclusion of gender mainstreaming as a priority in national action plans.

## **11. It is not enough to be present; women's participation needs to be meaningful**

Action 3 of the Oslo Action Plan and Action 4 the Lausanne Action Plan aim to remove barriers to women's participation in Convention meetings. A 2019 UNIDIR report titled *Still behind the curve* shows that improvement in women's participation in disarmament treaty meetings has been slower compared to other sectors. This is a structural problem rooted in government structures which the APMBC or CCM will not be able to overcome on its own. However, the fact that the two Action Plans call for states to monitor this indicator makes clear what is expected from states.

One lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic is that numerical representation of women increases in a virtual format. However, women's participation should not be reduced to counting the women in the room or online. We need to analyse if conversations are inclusive and if discussions represent the views of women and other diverse groups. The role of gender focal points in the Convention machineries of both the APMBC and the CCM ensure that gender mainstreaming and women's participation is regularly considered during plenary meetings.

## **12. Reporting is key to measuring progress against OAP and LAP commitments**

Although transparency reporting is critical to measuring progress, there are certain challenges that need to be overcome. For instance, many States Parties do not report at all. Even when they do report, the information on gender mainstreaming can be limited. The reporting templates, built for quantitative reporting, make it difficult to address qualitative aspects such as gender mainstreaming. Sex and age disaggregated data is often included, but this lacks analysis on how the data has been used to inform operations. The lack of reporting, however, is not necessarily an indication of performance; in some cases, States Parties include more information in statements at Meetings of States Parties. Gender Focal Points can play a key role in promoting reporting, asking follow-up questions and encouraging states to be transparent regarding their mainstreaming efforts.

Improved and increased reporting should be encouraged among donor states as well, not only affected states. In addition, all states should consider composition of delegations and do their best to share practices and lessons learned. For States Parties that have joined both the APMBC and the CCM, it is important to seek synergies and approach reporting holistically. The sector should also consider the analysis on gender and diversity published by the Mine Action Review.

### **Conclusion**

The Oslo and Lausanne Action plans have brought discussions on gender and diversity from the sidelines to the plenary. However, plenary discussions need to be informed by changes on the ground, in mine action operations and everyone has a role to play in this. Transparency reporting and the role of the gender focal points under the two Conventions provide useful tools for advancing the conversation. Formalising regular dialogue on progress and challenges with gender and diversity mainstreaming can also be done through regular meetings in-country, between mine action authorities, donors and operators through a national mine action platform or similar structure. Attitudes are key to the way we work, so it is important to nurture the right mindset. Shifting attitudes requires sustained awareness-raising and capacity development, which takes time to achieve, so long-term commitment from all stakeholders is required.

### **Further reading:**

- Working papers introduced by [Finland](#) and [The Netherlands](#) at the most recent APMBC and CCM Review Conferences;
- Updated [UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes](#),
- [Training](#) and [resources provided by the GICHD](#)